



Independent Police Review

September 11, 2024

U.S. District Judge Michael H. Simon
Mark O. Hatfield U. S. Courthouse
Room 1527
100 S.W. 3rd St.
Portland, Oregon 97204

The Honorable Michael Simon,

Delaying the implementation of the Community Police Oversight Board places the current systems of community and independent oversight - the Citizen Review Committee and Independent Police Review (IPR) – in danger of collapse.

Since the voters approved the Community Oversight System, the City has taken numerous steps to reassure IPR staff and incentivize retention. Nonetheless, this has been a long and challenging period of uncertainty. The decision to delay the long-awaited implementation of the Community Police Oversight Board prolongs this uncertain transition period and increases the risk that IPR employees will leave for other opportunities. If IPR staff begin to leave, there is a significant risk of a domino-effect of resignations. We have been working to prevent this since 2020 and it is extremely challenging. I have personally turned down other opportunities, some with higher compensation, because some IPR staff have shared that if I were to leave, they would also leave. I doubt there are qualified people who would want my position with the uncertainty attached to it. There are certainly no internal candidates. Undoubtedly, as we approach the sunset of IPR, it will be increasingly difficult to replace any employees who do not remain through to the transition to the new Oversight System.

I urge the Court to consider the impact of the actual length of delay caused by this decision. This is not a delay of a few months. As a leader in the City, familiar with the intricacies of City bureaucracy, I think it is unlikely that our new Council will be able to accomplish CBPA appointments quickly upon taking office or any time within the first four-to-six months of their terms. Once CBPA members are finally appointed, there remain many next steps before the Oversight System can begin taking on cases. The CBPA must, among other things, go through training, appoint a director, recommend administrative rules, adopt standard operating procedures, and hire and train managers and investigators. All this work of moving the Oversight System forward has been put on hold, but until complete, IPR must continue taking on new cases. Any additional delay jeopardizes a stable Independent Police Review; yet, that stability is essential for near-term police accountability in Portland. Those of us working in the current system, both employees and volunteers, have put a lot on hold for years now. I am very concerned that additional delay could come at a high cost.

Sincerely,

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Ross Caldwell
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